



Plant Archives

Journal homepage: <http://www.plantarchives.org>

DOI Url : <https://doi.org/10.51470/PLANTARCHIVES.2025.v25.no.1.379>

A STUDY ON THE STATUS AND INVOLVEMENT OF RURAL YOUTH IN DIFFERENT LIVELIHOOD RESOURCES IN JALPAIGURI DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL INDIA

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(Date of Receiving-28-01-2025; Date of Acceptance-03-04-2025)

ABSTRACT

The study analyses different livelihood options of rural youth in a northern district (Jalpaiguri) of West Bengal. The study has been conceived with the fact that India has the largest youth population with below 35 years of age among which rural youth stand at approximately 67-68% of India's total population. These rural youth are the backbone of Indian economy. But recent studies show that around 40 percent of youth had quit their traditional avocation of agriculture and were findings jobs in Non-agricultural areas. The Data collection was conducted during December, 2022 to June, 2023 with the help of a structured interview schedule through personal interview method. The total hundred number of respondents were selected randomly. The collected data was analysed using some important statistical measures like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation, coefficient of variation and Simpson index of diversity. The result shows that forty four percent respondents involved in agriculture. result shows that most (55.00%) of the respondents possess no livelihood diversity followed by 6.00% 35.00% and 4.00% who have low level, medium level and high level of livelihood diversity respectively.

Key words: Rural youth, Livelihood resources

Introduction

Around 70% portion of India is occupied by rural Areas which contributes a large chunk to India's GDP by the way of agriculture, self-employment, services etc. India enjoys demographic dividend as it has the largest youth population with below 35 years of age among which rural youth stand at approximately 66% of India's total population. Youth, represent a nation's most valuable resource. India, with its diverse youth demographic, holds the key to its socio-economic prosperity. The intangible capital of youth, their enthusiasm, is pivotal for national development prospects. Policy makers and planners have long recognized the necessity of harnessing youth's capacities and energies for productive ventures. Disparities in access to institutions and facilities are evident between urban and rural youth. Rural youth's

aspirations, heavily influenced by familial responsibilities, shape their learning experiences and choices. Rural youth, engaged in various income-generating activities, underpin economic growth through job creation, food production, and raw material supply. However, rural areas often grapple with poverty and marginalization (Alemu, 2012). Despite rapid urbanization, poverty predominantly persists in rural regions (IFAD, 2001). India's contribution to youth population in developing Asian countries is significant, accounting for about 33 percent (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Globally, over one billion youth reside in developing nations, with approximately 50 percent living in rural areas (United Nations, 2007). Livelihood diversification refers to the process through which an assorted range of activities and social support capabilities is crafted to ensure survival and elevate one's standard

of living. Various definitions have been attributed to livelihood diversification. Among these, diversification could denote an increase in the number of income sources or the equilibrium among different sources. Ahmed *et al.*, (2018) discovered that majority of the respondents had got their livelihoods diversified from agriculture to different activities. Most of the respondents had diversified their livelihoods at medium and high level. Bhuita (2016) discovered that majority (46.00%) of the respondents in lower altitude had low level of livelihood diversity and most (58.00%) of the respondents of higher altitude under his study area had medium level of livelihood diversity. among on farm occupational activities of the tribal youth, majority (50.83%) were involved in livestock possession. Among off-farm activities, most (25.00%) of them were engaged as farm labour and among non-farm activities, majority (56.67%) of them were associated with the profession of non-farm wage labour (Bhattacharjee, 2016). It was also observed that nearly almost equal proportions of 39.27% and 39.68% of rural youth had low and medium level of involvement in both agricultural and non-agricultural income generating activities respectively, whereas, 21.05% of them had high involvement in both agricultural and non-agricultural income generating activities (Umunakwe, 2015). Nearly half (49.00%) of the respondents were regular labourers, followed by around 30.00% of the respondents being engaged in construction work and adopting self-employment (such as vegetable sellers milk vendors, auto- driving, etc. (Singh *et al.*, 2011). Anamica (2013) witnessed out that most (95.56%) of the respondents were engaged in non-agricultural works and only few (4.44%) were involved in agricultural work.

Materials and Methods

The district Jalpaiguri was selected purposively keeping in mind the researcher's convenience with the study region, availability of time and other resources. The villages which are Saptibari, Dakshin Altagram, Sukhanibasti and Gendrapara Tea Garen from four different blocks Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Nagrakata and Banarhat were selected by random sampling. Finally, twenty-five (25) number of respondents were randomly selected from the exhaustive list of each of the four selected villages. making a total number of 100 respondents from the entire district. The data was collected by using the personal interview method with the help of the pre-tested interview schedule. The statistical tools like mean, frequency and percentage were used for the analysis The Simpson index of Diversity (SID) is commonly used to measure occupational

Table 1: Distribution of rural youth according to involvement in different livelihood activities.

S.	Category	Frequency	(%)
(A)	Agriculture	44	44.00
(B)	Livestock	14	14.00
(i)	Goat Rearing	6	6.00
(ii)	Cow Rearing or Dairy	9	9.00
(iii)	Poultry	3	3.00
(iv)	Fishery	4	4.00
(C)	Business	25	25.00
(D)	Service	19	19.00
(i)	Govt. Service	11	11.00
(ii)	Private Service	8	8.00
(E)	Labour	31	31.00
(i)	Agricultural Labour	9	9.00
(ii)	Non – agricultural Labour	22	22.00
(F)	Other Marginal Works	19	19.00

diversification. Khatun and Roy (2012) conducted a study in which it was also used. For the present study, it was applied to calculate livelihood diversification. The formula is given below:

$$S.I.D = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N P_i^2$$

Where, P_i is the income proportion from the i -th income source and N is the total number of sources of income. SID has a value ranging from 0 to 1, with SID=0 indicating that there is just one source of income.

Results and Discussion

Involvement of rural youth in different livelihood sources

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of rural youth according to involvement in different livelihood activities. The result shows that 44.00% of the respondents are involved in Agriculture, 31.00% of the respondent are involved as labour, 25.00% of them are involved in Business, and an equal portion of 19.00% of the respondents are involved in Service and Other Marginal Works and 14.00% of the respondents are involved in Livestock.

Under Livestock Category, 9.00% of the respondents are engaged in Cow Rearing or Dairy, 6.00% of the respondents are engaged in Goat Rearing, 4.00% are involved in Fishery and 3.00% of the respondents are engaged in Poultry.

Under Service category, 11.00% and 8.00% of the respondents are involved in Government Service and Private Service respectively.

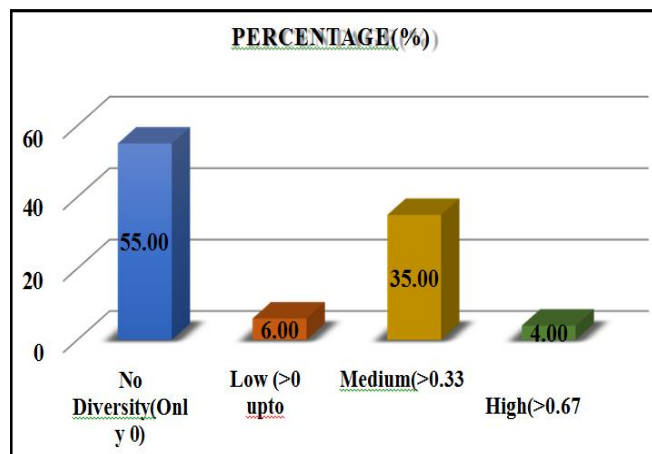
Table 2: Distribution of rural youth according to their specific set of practicing livelihood activities.

Categories	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Only Service	14	14.00
Only Business	15	15.00
Only Other Marginal Works	12	12.00
Only Labour	11	11.00
Only Agriculture	3	3.0
Service + Other Marginal Works	1	1.0
Business + Other marginal Works	1	1.0
Agriculture + Livestock	5	5.0
Agriculture + Service	3	3.0
Agriculture + Labour	17	17.00
Agriculture + Business	6	6.0
Agriculture + Other marginal Works	3	3.0
Agriculture + Livestock + Other marginal Works	1	1.0
Agriculture + Livestock + Business	4	4.0
Agriculture + Livestock + Service	1	1.0
Agriculture + Livestock + Labour	3	3.0

Under Labour category, 22.00% of the respondents are engaged in non - agricultural labour work and 9.00% of them are engaged in agricultural labour work.

But here, the different categories of livelihood activities are not mutually exclusive categories based on the frequency or percentage distribution of the respondents involved in them. It means that those respondents who are involved in more than one occupational source are part of more than one category of livelihood activities, contributing the amount of frequency as well as percentage of the respondents of each of those categories of the livelihood activities in which they are involved.

Involvement of rural youth in specific set of livelihood activities

**Fig. 1:** Distribution of respondents according to livelihood diversity.**Table 3:** Distribution of rural youth according to their involvement or non- involvement in farm activities.

Category	Description	Frequency (n=100) and Percentage (%)
Involved in Farm Activities (as single source of income or with combination of other non- farm activities)	Involvement in agriculture (or settled farming or crop farming) and livestock (Includes Goat Rearing, Cow Rearing or Dairy, Poultry and Fishery)	46 (46.00)
Not Involved in Farm Activities (Involved only in one non-farm or combination of more than one non-farm activities)	involved in business, service, labour work and other marginal works but not involved in any one of the farm activities.	54 (54.00)

In Table 2, it is found that among different categories (not mutually exclusive based on frequency distribution of the respondents) of livelihood activities, 44.00% of the respondents are involved in agriculture and 14.00% of the respondents are involved in livestock. Whereas in table 6.24, it is found that among different categories of set (mutually exclusive based on frequency distribution of the respondents) of specific practicing livelihood means, 'Only Agriculture' is done by only 3.00% of the respondents, no one of the respondents is involved in Only Livestock and only 5.00% of them are involved in 'Agriculture + Livestock'. Rest of them who are involved in Agriculture and Livestock, they are engaged in these activities in combination with other non-farm activities.

The distribution of rural youth based on their involvement or non-involvement in farm activities is

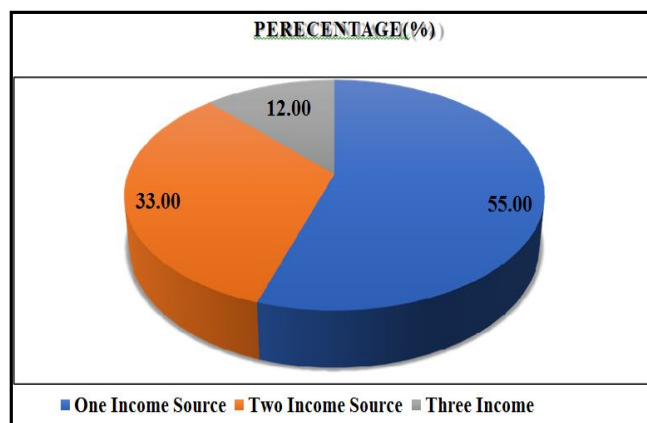
**Fig. 2:** Distribution of rural youth according to their number of income sources.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to livelihood diversity.

Category of Diversity (SID range)	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage(%)	Statistics
No Diversity (Only 0)	55	55.00	Mean: 0.20 SD: 0.25 Max: 0.76 Min: 0 CV: 125
Low (>0 to 0.33)	6	6.00	
Medium (>0.33 to 0.67)	35	35.00	
High (>0.67)	4	4.00	

further depicted in the following sub-section.

Distribution of rural youth according to their involvement or non-involvement in farm activities

Table 3 depicts that more than half (54.00%) of the respondents are not involved in any kind of farm activities whereas only 46.00% of the respondents are involved in farm activities.

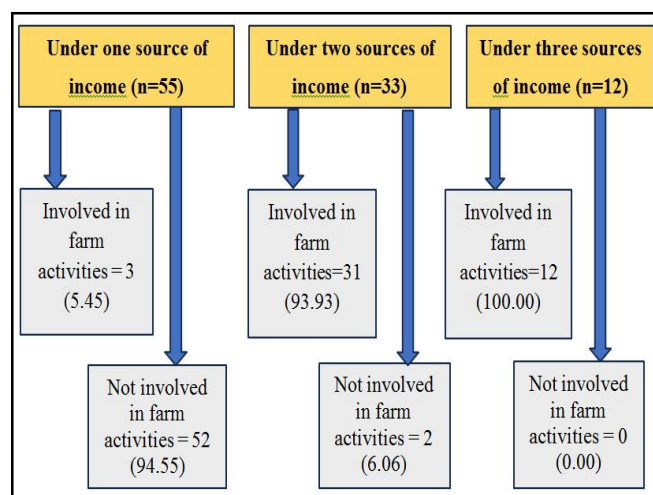
Livelihood diversity found among the rural youth

Table 4 and Fig. 1 indicates the distribution of respondents according to their livelihood diversity. The result shows that most (55.00%) of the respondents possess no livelihood diversity followed by 6.00% 35.00% and 4.00% who have low level, medium level and high level of livelihood diversity respectively.

Distribution of rural youth according to their number of income sources.

Table 5 and Fig. 2 shows that majority (55.00%) of the respondents have only one source of income, followed by 33.00% and 12.00% who have two source and three source of income respectively.

Involvement and non-involvement of rural youth in farm activities under different no. of income sources.

**Fig. 3:** Distribution of rural youth according to involvement and non-involvement in farm activities under different no. of income sources.**Table 5:** Distribution of rural youth according to their number of income sources.

Category	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
One income source	55	55.00
Two income sources	33	33.00
Three income sources	12	12.00

Fig. 3 shows that among the respondents who have only one source of income (n=55), majority (94.55%) of them are not involved in farm activities whereas only 5.45% of them are engaged in farm activities. It is also found that among the respondents who have two sources of income (n=33), most (93.93%) of them are involved in farm activities whereas only 6.06% of them are not involved in any kind of farm activities. Further the result shows that among the respondents who have three number of income source (n=12), all (100.00%) of them are involved in farm activities leaving no one (0.00%) who are not involved in farm activities.

So, in this whole section of this chapter, It is found that among those respondents who are not diversified, large majority of them are not involved in farm activities whereas among those respondents who are diversified or have more than one source of income, huge majority of them are involved in farm activities in combination with other non-farm activities. So, it can be said that in this study, being involved in farm activities is nearly synonymous to having more livelihood diversity for most of the respondents. It is also revealed that majority of the rural youth, even if they belong to agricultural background, are not involved in farm activities and those who are diversified and engaged in farm activities, they also do not rely on farming solely as they have other sources of non-farm occupational means. And it directly reflects they do not see farming as a prospectus sector of livelihood and hence most of them possess moderate to low attitude towards farming, which has also been found in the study.

Conclusion

The study shows that majority of the respondents are non-diversified and depends on non-farming source of income. Those who are diversified, most of them have farming as an option but not totally depend on farming for income. It shows majority of them are not perceiving agriculture as a safe choice of livelihood.

Acknowledgement

The authors express the gratitude to the farmers of Jalpaiguri district for their kind support in collecting the data during the study.

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